Cherry Magic! Spoiler-Filled Review

Cherry Magic!, also known as *Cherry Magic! Thirty Years of Virginity Can Make You a Wizard?!*, is a comedic boy's love series, adapted from a manga of the same name by Yuu Toyota. There were previously TV drama and film adaptations. The anime is directed by Yoshiko Okuda and written by Tomoko Konparu. Tomoki Hasegawa is the music composer. The animation studio Satelight, known for *Macross Frontier, Macross Delta, Cannon Busters*, and *Somali and the Forest Spirit*, worked on this series.

Cherry Magic! is a sweet boy's love office rom-com with "undercurrents about navigating consent." Its more gay than *My New Boss is Goofy*, a somewhat similar series (in some respects) that aired last year. While some may dislike yaoi, especially the uke-seme dynamic, describing it as predatory, this series centers on what a healthy relationship means. That includes knowing someone's boundaries. In this way it differs from *I'm in Love with the Villainess* (ILTV), with some saying that Rae was sexually harassing Claire, a hot take which misses the fact that Rae was doing this because she felt that her feelings were not going to be reciprocated. As time goes on, she respects Claire more as a person and recognizes more of her boundaries, shown in later light novels and manga, although not as much in the anime adaptation.

I came to *Cherry Magic!* with an open mind. I'd only watched a few boy's love anime, including the well-done *Sasaki and Miyano*, and *Antique Bakery*, which has some yaoi themes. I've read boy's love webcomics such as *Daybreak*, *Jamie*, and *That Awkward Magic!!*. Generally, I've gravitated more toward girl's love (often known as yuri) media. I've become used to tropes and themes in those stories. This series is a bit hackneyed, falls into commonly used genre tropes, and has a strange/silly title, but it is relatively innocent, can be cute, and moves slow.

The series begins with 30-year-old virgin, Kiyoshi Adachi (voiced by Chiaki Kobayashi). He learns he can hear a person's thoughts when touching them. This starts as annoyance, a "painfully drab" and "useless" power in his words. In line with the series' focus on respecting boundaries, Adachi considers touching girls to learn what they think of him but stops himself from doing so. This comes to a head when Yuichi Kurosawa (voiced by Ryōta Suzuki) accidentally wall-slams, known as kabedon or kabe don, him in the elevator! He learns that Kurosawa, his popular (among fellow women in his workplace) work and handsome coworker, has a crush on him. Adachi realizes that his magical powers aren't imaginary, when he hears the embarrassing things Kurosawa wants to do with him.

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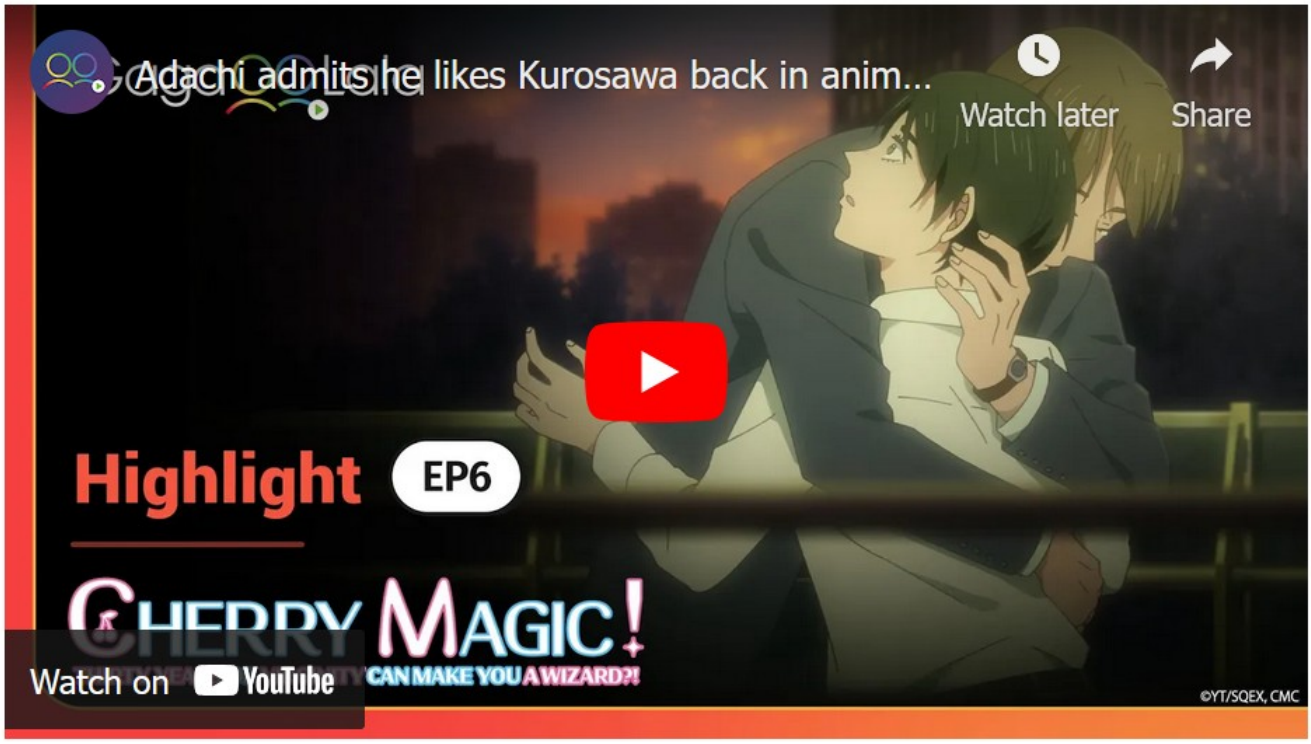
Unlike the aforementioned ILTV, featuring Rae the boundary-smasher, who joins other characters which have violated people's boundaries, Adachi and Kurosawa respect each other's personal

space. This fits with *Cherry Magic!*'s pacing. In the first episode, both bond over manga and spend the night together. But *nothing* happens between them. Later, Adachi ends up distancing himself from Kurosawa because his love is too much. They later reconnect over food. Adachi sees Kurosawa as "very good friend," running away so he doesn't impose on him. This leads to the introduction of another protagonist: romance novelist Masato Tsuge (voiced by Makoto Furukawa). He is Adachi's friend and has... no experience with actual romance!

The second episode involves more romantic closeness between Adachi and Kurosawa. Adachi also learns that Tsuge is a virgin, which does not help matters. This is complicated by awkwardness, such as a forehead kiss on Adachi by Kurosawa. It is compounded in the third episode, when Yuta Rokkaku (voiced by Yusuke Shirai), a new hire, tries to get close to Kurosawa, while drunk. The staff secretary Nozomi Fujisaki (voiced by Ami Koshimizu) begins to have more of a role, becoming more of a key character (although not a protagonist) as the series goes forward. It is also revealed that Adachi gained more confidence while being around Kurosawa.

A new character is introduced in *Cherry Magic!*'s fourth episode: an unnamed deliveryman. Tsuge learns that he has mind-reading powers when accidentally touching this man's hand, who also pets Tsuge's cat, Udon. Due to their interaction, he can't get the deliveryman's face out of his head. He believes that the power, of hearing people's thoughts, is terrifying. In the same episode, Adachi almost admits he has feelings for Kurosawa. He is surprised to learn that Kurosawa was hanging out with his big sister, rather than a girlfriend!

Other episodes add to this messiness. Adachi learns of Fujisaki's inner thoughts. He even thinks that Fujisaki likes him. This can't be further from the truth: she is a fujoshi, and fantasizes about Adachi and Kurosawa getting together. She almost represents audience members who ship Adachi and Kurosawa together. This episode is key. Kurosawa confesses that he has romantic feelings for Adachi, who is unsure how to react. Simply put, Adachi *still* has to sort out his own feelings.



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Adachi's incorrect belief, that Fujisaki has feelings for Kurosawa, continues in the sixth episode. He even believes that dating Kurosawa would be a pain. Kurosawa thinks he caused trouble for Adachi by confessing his love. Adachi realizes he can't go back to how things were before and ends up confessing his love for Kurosawa. Tsuge begins to fall in love with his deliveryman, which starts influencing his writing. He learns the deliveryman's name is Minato Wataya (voiced by Gen Satō). Adachi and Kurosawa plan their first date as "KuroAda," a ship name dubbed on them by Fujisaki in a voiceover at the episode's end.

As *Cherry Magic!* goes forward, the relationship between Adachi and Kurosawa deepens. Adachi feels self-conscious as he continues to hear Kurosawa's inner thoughts. He considers telling Kurosawa he is a "wizard." Tsuge is overwhelmed by Minato's thoughts. Absurdly, there's the revelation that Tsuge and Adachi can communicate telepathically thanks to their "wizard" powers. Adachi, he reveals, while he and Kurosawa are in the reference room, that he has wizard powers, surprising Kurosawa. He is predictably embarrassed that Adachi can hear his thoughts. They end up kissing one another and hugging.

Later episodes involve Tsuge helping his romantic "rival" Rokkaku, Kurosawa messing with Adachi now that he knows that Adachi can read his thoughts, and Kurosawa confronting Adachi about why he made the decision about rejecting the transfer on his own *without* telling him. He tells Adachi that he doesn't know he is thinking unless he tells him and walks away. The ninth episode's ending is rough, with a cliffhanger which makes you wonder: what is Adachi gonna do?

This *Cherry Magic!* arc, with some parallels to the painful Love Scales arc in the *I'm in Love with the Villainess* anime adaptation, manga, and light novels, is important for the story but still heartbreaking. Adachi tries to fix his relationship with Kurosawa, and realizes he has to tell Kurosawa his true feelings, Tsuge has issues of his own. After Minato fails his first-round audition, Tsuge tries to inspire Minato. He says the wrong thing, claiming he has "ulterior motives" for being nice to him. While both blooming relationships are in shambles, you could say that you don't get this far in a relationship *without* some (emotional) pain.

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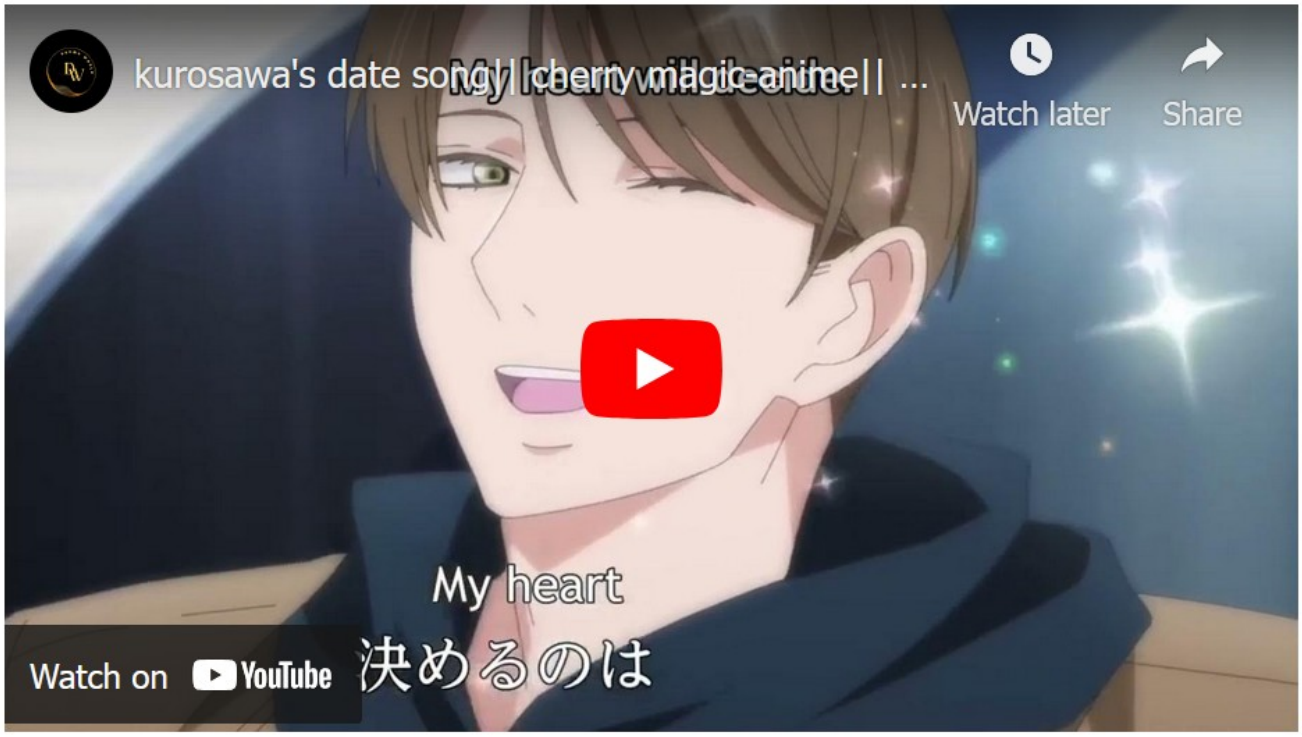
In *Cherry Magic!'s* penultimate episode, Adachi writes Kurosawa a letter, explaining his feelings for Kurosawa. I liked how they showed Adachi reading the letter and the thought he put into it. It reminded me, in many ways, of the letter-writing in *Violet Evergarden*, especially how Violet became better to communicate people's thoughts in the written word. Adachi's response contrasts with Tsuge.

He fails to come up with a way to express his feelings for Minato in written form. Instead, he gives Minato a gift. Both end up getting together, reciprocating each other's feelings, with Tsuge making a valid point: love makes fools of us all.

The icing on the cake is when Kurosawa unexpectedly shows up outside the hotel where Adachi is staying. Both talk about their feelings for one another. In the process, Kurosawa says he wishes he had magic powers too. He even has to stop Adachi when he begins rattling off all the things he likes about Kurosawa. After they kiss one another, they lie on the bed together, and are implied to have sexual intercourse. This is less explicit than other anime sex scenes, like those in *Interspecies Reviewers* or *Peter Grill and the Philosopher's Time*.

The series finale begins with Adachi embarrassed he did the "dirty deed" with Kurosawa. He could hear Kurosawa's thoughts the entire time! Unsurprisingly, Adachi's magic power disappears because they had sex. While he laments this loss, Kurosawa cheers him up. He notes that while he's grateful for these "wizard" powers, it was Adachi's *words* that made him fall in love. In response, Adachi says he doesn't regret having sex. Kurosawa realizes that Adachi is more charming than him as he says intense words.

Apart from the blushing, there's also a key revelation from Kurosawa: when he is around Adachi he is incapable of being perfect. Adachi's other senses seem to heighten, including his sense of smell. Although Adachi decides to accept the offer to transfer to the Nagasaki branch, where he will stay for a year, and there are continual problems, they remain together. His work colleague Kusmoto helps him along the way. Fujisaki calls for KuroAda to hang in there, essentially serving as a stand-in for the audience, hoping they stay together.



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Cherry Magic! ends with Adachi and Kurosawa thinking what they can do for one another, embracing once again, and putting rings on each other's fingers. Tsuge and Minato hang out. Fujisaki notices these rings and is overjoyed. Reflecting the creator's support of same-sex marriage in Japan, Adachi and Kurosawa begin living together and get married. A post-credits scene zooms out from a Adachi and Kurosawa wedding picture with both saying they are "home."

The happy, fitting ending to this series comes at a time that another ongoing anime named *Tadaima, Okaeri,* adapted from Ichi Ichikawa's manga, *Welcome Home*, centers on two gay college graduates, who are a married couple with a first-born child. That series comments on homophobia and other discrimination while falling into Omegaverse genre. Regardless of your thoughts of the genre (I'm undecided on it), that series effectively depicts a happy gay married family.

Yuu Toyota, author of the manga for which this series is based, also did a cooking manga entitled *Papa and Daddy's Home Cooking,* which also seems to have yaoi themes. She also was the creator of the ONA spinoff Cheri Maho Mini Gekijō from *Cherry Magic!*, which showed on YouTube. Overall, despite some issues and criticisms which I have noted in this review, I enjoyed this series greatly and hope it gets a season two. I haven't watched the live-action television drama, which also adapted the manga, the 2022 film, but I am curious to check it out after watching this series.

The voice actors of this series are talented. Kobayashi voiced Kaoru Mamizuka in *Too Cute Crisis* and Noid 262 in *Metallic Rouge*, while Suzuki voiced Yū Ishigami in *Kaguya-sama: Love Is War* and Yukimaru in *Fena: Pirate Princess.* Furukawa also voiced Miyuki Shirogane in *Kaguya-sama*. Satō voiced Rintarō Futsu in *Stars Align* and Alan Ferrera in *Bibliophile Princess.* Shirai voiced Ian Stuart in *My Next Life as a Villainess: All Routes Lead to Doom!*, Shūmei Sasaki in *Sasaki and Miyano*, and Keiichirō Akasaka in *Tokyo Mew Mew New*. Koshimizu, for her part, previously voiced Nanaka Yatsushiro in *Myself ; Yourself*, Sailor Jupiter in *Sailor Moon Crystal*, Mikumo Guynemer in *Macross Delta*, Holo in *Spice and Wolf*, Natsumi Tokugawa in *Love, Chunibyo & Other Delusions*, Ringo Kagasaki in *The Many Sides of Voice Actor Radio*, Elda in *Otaku Elf*, and Yang Xiao Long in *RWBY: Ice Queendom*.

Cherry Magic! can be streamed on Crunchyroll. A Blu-ray, including some episodes, can be purchased from Amazon Japan. On May 29th, a Blu-ray, including all episodes, will release.

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